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STATE PASS AID FOR TMEFFORD AND VKWOK
TREASURY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS - RADKINS AND MMILLS
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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: ESF SIGNING CEREMONY GENERATES POSITIVE NEWS
COVERAGE

1. (SBU) Summary: On February 7, the Ambassador participated in a signing ceremony for the \$9 million U.S. ESF grant to the World Bank to be used for conditional cash payments to poor families. Remarks by the Ambassador, World Bank director, Turkish Treasury Undersecretary and the manager of the project, helped publicize the project and the U.S. role. The event garnered substantial attendance from the press, who produced ample, and mostly favorable, coverage. Combined with the largely positive coverage of the Secretary's visit, Turkish newspaper readers have been given

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a break from the relentlessly negative coverage of the U.S. This demonstrates, however, that a modest allocation of ESF funds can play a useful Post believes this kind of event can play a useful role in countering anti-Americanism in Turkey. here, justifying the relatively modest allocation of ESF funds. End Summary.

Ambassador Speaks at Signing Ceremony at Turkish Treasury:

2. (SBU) The U.S. Government's \$9 million grant to the World Bank for the Social Risk Mitigation Project of the Turkish Social Solidarity Fund, was signed at the ceremony at Turkish Treasury. As the Ambassador witnessed the U.S. grant letter of agreement, which had been previously signed by USAID DAA Mefford (who also attended), the World Bank and Turkish Treasury signed the companion agreement under which the Bank passes the funds on to the GOT for use by the Turkish Social Solidarity Fund to disburse to poor families under the project.

3. (SBU) In addition to the Ambassador, Treasury Undersecretary Ibrahim Canakci, World Bank Director Andrew Vorkink, and Project Director Yedigir Gokalp also spoke at the ceremony. In his remarks, the Ambassador highlighted the U.S. desire to help the poorest families in Turkey, and noted the U.S. interest in education issues and, in particular, increasing school enrollment rates for girls, one of the goals of the project. He highlighted the historical role U.S. public and private institutions, including USAID, have played in supporting education and development in Turkey in the past. The other speakers thanked the U.S. for its contribution, and used the event to help publicize the project itself, which is gradually increasing its nationwide coverage and delivery. The project now reaches nearly 1.2 million beneficiaries, all from the poorest 6% of Turkish society.

Good Press Attendance and Coverage:

4. (SBU) Due to the Embassy's and the Whether because of Turkish Treasury's or the Embassy's efforts to call in the press and as a result of or because of heightened interest in bilateral relations on the heels of the Secretary's visit, the event was well attended. Most major newspapers and at least one television station gave the signing prominent ran coverage pieces the following day, about it, with some headlines crediting the alluding to U.S. for supporting for the poor. Most of the coverage was straightforward, with none of the misinformation and twisting and conspiracy theories about U.S. motives that are is common herein Turkey's media.

ESF Funding Helps US Image in Turkey:

5. (SBU) Later this month, the Ambassador intends to build on the signing event by visiting a school in a poor neighborhood of Ankara with a high proportion of students

benefiting from the program. We will also find other ways to continue to highlight our support to the Turkish people. Post believes the Ppositive coverage, such as that received by this grant, which "changesd the subject" regarding America, and highlightse U.S. friendship and help to the most disadvantaged Turks. It, is an important element to counter anti-Americanism here. Post believes that the positive image-buildIn addition to helping those in need, the positive image building, and the usefulness of this kind of project show howjustifies we can use a limited the relatively modest sumsESF allocation to make a tangible difference under consideration in the future for ESF in Turkey.